

## DEFENCE OF THE CLERGY.

## SPEECH

OF

HON. JAMES MEACHAM,  
OF VERMONT,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MAY 17, 1854.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—

Mr. MEACHAM said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: As the subject before the Committee has been changed since I spoke on the Nebraska bill, the rules would shield me from the charge of intrusion if I should yield to the motion just made to rise and adjourn; this would give me a fresh hour in the morning; but knowing that a large number of friends and foes of the bill, yet unheard, desire to speak in the brief remaining time, I prefer to go on now, rather than displace any one who desires to take part in this discussion. I am quite aware that this intended courtesy to others compels me to speak under great disadvantage; with few and short notes of preparation; when nature, exhausted by a session of eleven hours, is clamorous for repose. But I believe some one ought to speak on the subject I now introduce to the Committee.

The present session of Congress has made some new and unexpected developments. It has generally been supposed that if the ordained defenders and guardians of religion should disgrace or abandon their place, that it would be left to the neglect and scorn of the world. Good men will be gratified to learn that it is not so; that just as soon as it was known that three thousand clergymen had proved themselves unworthy of their profession by a memorial, members of Congress sprang forward with haste and zeal to save religion from disgrace. It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. I suppose this generally true in the natural world; the depopulated seats during this session of the House, however, would lead to the belief that this law, as well as some others, is "inoperative" in Congress. But it must be great consolation to know

that here nature abhors a vacuum in spiritual things. See the proof given by

Senator DOUGLAS. "It is evident, sir, that these men know not what they are talking about. It is evident that they ought to be rebuked, and required to confine themselves to their vocation, instead of neglecting their flocks, and bringing our holy religion into disrepute, by violating its sacred principles, and disregarding the obligations of truth and honor, by presenting here a document which is so offensive that no gentleman can endorse it without violating all the rules of courtesy, or propriety, and of honor."

Senator MASON. "I trust I shall never see the day when the Senate of the United States will treat the authors of such petitions, upon any subject proper for legislation pending before the body, coming from the people of the United States, with aught but respect. But I understand this petition to come from a class who have put aside their character of citizens." \* \* \* \* "Their mission upon earth is unknown to the Government. Of all others, they are the most encroaching, and, as a body, arrogant class of men. What do these ministers say? Do they, as citizens, enter into a statement of the facts of which they complain? Do they recite what will be the political effects of the measure of which they complain? No; they inform us that they come here, through their petition, in the presence of the Almighty, and invoke His vengeance upon the Senate of the United States, as about to commit, in their judgment, a great moral wrong."

Senator BUTLER. "When the clergy quit the province which is assigned to them, in which they can dispense the Gospel—that Gospel that is presented as the lamb, not as the tiger or the lion—when they would convert the lamb into the lion, going about in the form of agitators, seeking whom they may devour, instead of the meek and lowly representatives of Christ, they divest themselves of all respect which I can give them. Sir, the ministers of the Gospel are the representatives of the lowly and poor lamb—of Christ; but when the men who have signed that paper—I do not know with what ends; I do not say a word against them as individuals, for I have no doubt they are good and respectable, and many of them Christians—assume to organize themselves as clergymen, to come before the country and protest against the deliberations of the Senate of the United States, they deserve, at least, the grave censure of the body."

Senator ADAMS. "I concur with my friend from South Carolina in regard to the petition which has been presented and ordered to lie on the table. It is addressed to the Senate and House of Representatives, by a body of individuals as ministers of the Gospel. I trust I have as high a regard for their vocation as any other individual, and as much respect for the ministers of peace and good will on earth as any other individual; but when they depart from their high vocation, and come down to mingle in the turbid pools of politics, I would treat them just as I would all other citizens. I would treat their memorial and remonstrances precisely as I would those of other citizens."

Senator PETTIT. "But, sir, the Senator from Mississippi [Mr. ADAMS] says he has great respect and great reverence for the clergy, for the ministers of the Gospel, as such, while they keep their robes pure and unspotted; but when they descend to the turbid pools of politics, and bedabble their garments all over with the mud, and slime, and filth, which he would make you believe is to be found there, he loses all respect for them. So should I, if I could be led to believe that the waters of the pool of politics were any more turbid and filthy than the waters which flow through their contradictory streams of theology. I do not believe it, sir. I hold, on the contrary, that the waters of the pools of politics are infinitely more pellucid, and pure, and cheering, and refreshing, than the pool which surrounds their stagnant waters of theology—no two of them agreeing on any proposition which can be presented."

"Mr. MACDONALD, (H. R.) "I could give other extracts of this kind, but I will not occupy the time of the House in so doing; and in this connection I will simply remark, in justice to the North, that I have been surprised at the spirit of the denunciations which come from the Northern pulpit. These harangues are so violent, abusive, denunciatory, and so gross a violation of common decency, that I do not fear the effect they will have on the patriotism of the country. I do look with alarm, however, to the effect they will have upon the morals of the North. While these denunciations will not abate the patriotic feeling of the people, they will, I fear, corrupt the minds of our youth."

Mr. HUBBARD, (H. R.) "Then, too, 1,820 ministers of the Gospel perverted their sacred calling to the uses of factious politicians. The pulpit was profaned with the language of the hustings. The regret of sincere Christians was excited, while the moral sense of the country was shocked by railing anathemas, impiously fulminated, as in the name and by the authority of the Deity himself! This is not the only occasion upon

which the drum 'ecclesiastic' has beat to arms in the cause of partisan warfare. It was so during the war of 1812, when a class of clergymen made it their especial vocation to decry the cause of their own country, and advocate that of the enemy. They preached desertion, sedition, and treason, from the sacred desk." \* \* \* \* \* "Some three thousand clergymen have come into the Senate Chamber by memorial, protesting, as they allege, 'in the name of Almighty God, and in His presence,' against this measure, as a 'breach of faith,' a 'great moral wrong,' and denouncing 'the judgments of the Almighty' upon its supporters!" \* \* \* \* \* "They say they have a legal right thus to mingle in political affairs. So they have; thanks to the liberality and toleration of the Constitution and laws, it is their daily business to blacken and denounce. There is no doubt of their right, Mr. Chairman, and equally clear is the right of others to condemn their conduct, rebuke their presumption, and laugh at their folly."

Mr. TWEED, (H. R.) "There is another thing in connection with the discussion of this subject or bill, that I desire not only to notice, but to place upon it the seal of unconditional reprobation. I refer to the shameless prostitution of their high offices by some of the clergy of the North. I speak it more in sorrow than in anger, and I utter it as a Northern man, when I say that their attempt to control the legislation of the country is as outrageous as it is infamous." \* \* \* \* \* "With lies, false and damning, they have wooed many worshippers from that immortal faith that embodies our life, our all as a people." \* \* \* \* \* "Let but the North and the South be true to themselves and their country, and the wolves may howl, but cannot harm."

These are isolated but perfectly independent expressions. The latter gentleman, by his fervent rhetoric and impulsive elocution, would seem to leave the impression of very great sincerity. It was not absolutely settled in the mind of any member, that he would not doff the robes of the statesman, and return to his own city to supply the place of some shameless memorialist. It is quite difficult to look on this development, and not link it, by association, with an incident that occurred in another country some years since. I will give the history condensed. You may find it in full in a small book on your desk, a book which our excellent Speaker uses in administering the oath to members. While the reapers of Israel were gathering their wheat harvest in the valley, they were startled by an unusual sound. They listened, and heard the rumbling of wheels and the lowing of kine along the way; they saw a band of Philistine lords—probably of both branches of their Congress—panting and blowing in an attempt to keep up with two milch cows, hitched to a cart. And for what? Why, because the Ark of the Covenant was in that cart. They had kept that Ark a short time at Ashdod, and wished to get rid of it, for only the stump of their Dagon was left. They were peering very anxiously to see that the Ark was safe out of their own borders. The Philistine politicians are not the last that wish to keep the Ark at a respectful distance from their own idol.

The members of Congress have a strong ally in a portion of the press; and here another old error is exploded. It was supposed that as Jeshurun waxed fat, they were inclined to kick; but that is not so; they grow devout as they grow fat, the well-fed, sleek-headed men that "sleep well o' nights," chastise deserters, while every Cassius, "with a lean and hungry look," is mute amid the mournful desecration. A young, vigorous suckling of Senatorial pap comes up boldly and manfully to the rescue. The acknowledged organ of existing power, having charge of all the politics in this country, and oversight of all foreign nations, becomes the especial guardian of both the crozier and the bus-

kin. When it has finished the Herculean task of cleaving a tragedian unit, it goes home to weep, and, as in the case of Cromwell, some devout follower, or some profane wag, declares that the tears are so profuse and fluent as to overrun the threshold and deluge the whole dwelling. Why all these tears? It is weeping over the desolations of Zion, caused by a clerical memorial to the Senate of the United States. To the same end a pensioned press, over the whole land, is unkennelled and unleashed, to howl on the path of the recreant clergy.

I will pursue this part but one step further, to the highest point that can be reached. If the accredited organ of any power comes out from port every morning loaded down to the water's edge with the bitterest denunciations of a class of men, I infer, as I cannot help inferring, that it is done, not only by the connivance, but by the consent and counsel of the power for which it speaks. When Lucan was pouring adulations into the ear of Nero, he begged him to stay as long as possible on the earth, but when he did ascend the skies, that he would not plant his throne too far north or too far south of the celestial equator, lest his multitudinous godship should unsettle the heavens, and bring down the sun, moon, and stars, in chaotic ruin. With equal sincerity we may pray that our Chief Magistrate will remain long on earth, and return late to heaven, *serus in cælum redeat*; but when he does go there, we have no advice to give as to the place he shall occupy. He may take his seat among the saints North or South, if there be such polar divisions in the New Jerusalem. We have no fear that his weight will unbalance the spheres, or shake the settled equilibrium of the heavenly world. There is one thing we do wish, that while he is on earth—no, no, while he is President—that he will try to keep his terrestrial equipoise; and when we are legislating, that he will not throw the weight of his great office, and the tremendous power of its bribing patronage, into either of our political tropics.

I now come to ask, in all seriousness, what the clergy have done to merit such abuse? They have signed a memorial praying Congress not to pass a certain bill—the Nebraska bill—and based their petition on moral, not political, grounds. The first charge is, that in speaking “in the name and presence of Almighty God,” they assume, as His organs, to speak His condemnation of this act as communicated to them. They assume no such thing. I ask any lawyer here to correct me in the illustration I give of this language. You are familiar with a legal instrument beginning with these words: “In the name of God, amen.” What is the meaning of that formula? When you sit by the bedside of a dying man, and use those words, do you mean to assert that you speak by the inspiration of God, dictating the language that follows? Certainly not. You use that as a solemn form of expression, attesting the sincerity of the person making a last will and testament. The only difference in the two expressions is, that one has and the other has not the adjective “Almighty,” which does not change the sense, whether taken or left. These words are used in the memorial in the same sense as in the legal instrument. It has seemed surprising that Congressional lawyers should use Congressional time in abusing the clergy for the use of a form of words that is certainly familiar, and ought to be understood by their own profession.

Another charge is, that the judgments of God are invoked on the supporters of this bill. There is the memorial, [holding it up,] and I challenge any man to come forward, and show a single word to sustain the charge. I will give him an abundance of my time. Will no one accept the challenge? You cannot get an invocation or denunciation of vengeance out of that memorial, for the plain reason that it is not in it. The language is, "We protest against it as a measure full of danger to the peace, and even the existence, of our beloved Union, and exposing *us* to the righteous judgment of the Almighty." A more unfounded or remorseless charge could not be fabricated.

Another charge is, that they have forsaken the character of citizens when they appear as clergymen; that they have no business to petition as a class. Why has not that been thought of before?

There are numberless instances where men have petitioned Congress as a class. I cite only a few cases. Merchants have done it repeatedly in commercial matters; they have done it as a class. Farmers have petitioned Congress to establish an Agricultural bureau in the Department of the Interior; they have done it as a class. Physicians have asked Congress to prevent the importation of adulterated foreign drugs; they have done it as a class. Marshals and deputy marshals have petitioned as a class. Soldiers have petitioned as a class. Since the offensive memorial was presented on the 14th of March, the mechanics of this District have petitioned the same Senate for money equal to the value of land to be given by the homestead bill; they did it as a class. Why is this objection brought to bear against a *single* class? I beg no pardon for asserting, in face of the highest authority, that "the minister is as much *known to this Government*" as the lawyer, or merchant, or farmer, or physician, or marshal, or soldier, or mechanic. Neither is to be stripped of his rights as a citizen, because, in his petition, he uses the term by which he is known in his vocation. There is no evidence that any two of those men were together when giving their signatures. It is as truly an independent individual act of each, as if three thousand and fifty separate memorials had been sent, each bearing only a solitary signature. From whence has come the authority to brand as intruders more than thirty thousand men in this Government, if they exercise—and that very rarely—their known and acknowledged rights? What imperative sense of duty has broken down the reluctant modesty of Senators and Congressmen, and forced them, so much against their will, to employ gross abuse in "rebuking the *presumption* of the clergy?"

Since this discussion began, it is quite common to represent the clergy as lagging behind the rest of the world in all the movements that tend to the progress of the race. I cheerfully meet that issue. From whence was derived our present system of representative governments, that is our pride and our boast? We are brought together in this Hall by the power of that system. It is impossible that the millions of free-men should be gathered from the four winds—almost from the caves of those winds—each to take care of his own individual interest. Hence each of us, from a separate locality, feel the serious responsibility of guarding the rights of ninety-three thousand persons, and so harmonizing the whole as not to trench on the rights of twenty-four millions in

other localities. In this place, as in a sounding gallery, we hear the dashing waves of the Atlantic and Pacific, mingling with the murmurs that rise from the beach of the Southern gulf and the Northern lakes. A system like ours was unknown to ancient Republics; their freedom was cradled in single cities. No Representatives from States, no Delegates from distant Territories, assembled to take part in the General Government that ruled the whole. So far as rulers were chosen by the people, it was by the people of central cities; hence the gift of citizenship was with them something more than an empty compliment. In the later days of Roman power, that privilege was freely extended to the provinces; had it been done in the representative form, it might have been of great advantage; but given, as it was, as a personal right to all the mass, it hastened her rapid descent to ruin; for often the sharp contests of political elections were decided by the spear and bludgeon of soldiers, who marched into the streets of Rome under provincial banners.

From whence, then, did our system come? Certainly not from politicians or statesmen. The first idea of a representative council began with the ministers of the Gospel. As early as the sixth century they had introduced all over Christendom the most perfect system of representation. Every Christian minister, however humble, had his share in the formation of these great assemblies, by which the affairs of the church were regulated. The gathering of political parliaments, under the representative system, was not till the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in the European States. Six centuries before the time assigned to representative civil convocations, the councils of Nice and Antioch had shown perfect models of universal representation, by delegates from dioceses in remote portions of Europe and Asia, and covering a field wider and broader than the whole Roman Empire. This was done centuries before William the Conqueror assembled his sixty thousand men, for a political purpose, at Winchester, or Clovis gathered his whole army at Champs-de-Mai. While we are here, then, in the enjoyment of all the privileges of our representative system, let it be borne in mind that the model of that system was furnished by the clergy in their ecclesiastical organizations.

I call your attention to another matter of history, to the reformation that brought civil and religious freedom to the world. There is no question as to its authors; and there is as little question that Wickliffe, and Huss, and Luther, and Melancthon, and Zwingli, were ministers of the Gospel. They began, and for a long time carried on, their great work of redemption, while the whole civil power was frowning upon their efforts. Princes and potentates desired things to remain as they were. Those in power do not wish a change; for if the existing system pass away, they must pass with it. It was so then; and, to save repetition, I ask you to consider, as we pass on, whether it has not been so in every instance which I shall name, since that time. By the law of their nature and their office, rulers are not reformers. Their judgments and feelings are warped to the belief that the system under which they live is the best system. Their interests resist innovation; and if their judgments are convicted, they are bribed to silence by their selfishness. Against that strong natural tendency, the clergy, then and since, warred bravely and successfully.

In the English revolution of 1688, the clergy took the lead; they first set the elements in motion. In that eventful struggle, to which the world is so much indebted, the pulpit was the lever and the fulcrum that moved the mass of the people to secure their rights. English freedom had been indebted to the power of the pulpit generations before. When liberty had expired in all the great continental monarchies, and its last feeble flickerings were seen in England, the English clergy, electrified by the spirit of the reformation, roused the people to rescue their liberties. From the time of Henry VIII, through seven succeeding reigns, they held their way undauntedly onward, bearing the crushing weight of thrones and parliaments. The only light that cheered them was in the bright but brief career of Edward VI. There is no other bigotry on earth so exclusive, intolerant, and relentless, as the bigotry of infidelity; and yet the chief of infidel bigots gives to religious men, led by the clergy, the credit of the great reform that planted the seeds of liberty in the English and American soils.

In France, the clergy took a subordinate but important part in the revolution. Many of them were heedless of the signs of the times, saw not the storm that was gathering; and when it broke in its wrath upon them, they were stupidly insensible to danger, while their battlements were reeling in every blast. But there were among them many wise, righteous, patriotic men, laboring with a successful influence for reform; and if, when called, they had stood as a separate estate, they might have done great good. But they made the mistake of the other two orders, and merged the three in one. In that devouring maelstrom everything human was engulfed.

With this brief allusion to long past and foreign affairs, I invite your attention to things at home. When the history of the American Revolution is written, as it should be and will be written, it will be seen that the ministers bore a part more important and effective than any other class. The statements I make of historical facts are general, and, like all general statements, are liable to exceptions; but these are very few. I cannot descend to particulars, and have no wish to make sectarian, or sectional, or party comparisons. My purpose is to vindicate the character and rights of the whole class. The clergy were peculiarly fitted, by their training and position in colonial society, to take the lead in the Revolution. The people of their time were eminently a religious people, and the ministers often drafted the laws that regulated the community. Ministers were very frequently the leaders of their flocks through the wilderness. I will give you a single instance, and the gentleman from New Hampshire [Mr. HIBBARD] will recognise it as a part of the history of his own State. In 1719, when the dark cloud of Indian war was hanging over the inhabitants of that province, dripping death from its skirts, the Rev. Mr. McGregore entered that province with sixteen Scottish families. Their ancestors had emigrated from Scotland to Londonderry, in Ireland, a century before, in search of freedom. But the teasing and torturing tyranny of Charles and James left them no rest, and one hundred and twenty families sought the promised land in the new world. They had marked characteristics—great bravery, industry, national pride, a high sense of honor, and fervent piety. The offspring of that little colony may

be counted by thousands and tens of thousands, spread over New Hampshire and Vermont. Among those who have not dishonored their parentage are Stark, Reid, McClay, McNeil, and Miller, worthy descendants of the dauntless men that fought with Wallace and Bruce. The first act of the little band, in their new home, was an act of religious service; the leader preached his first sermon under the shade of a spreading oak, where it would seem as if the hand of nature had scooped out an amphitheatre in which to dedicate the new settlement to the service of their Maker. I have stood in that spot, hard by the birthplace of a beloved and departed parent, and there recalled the earliest scenes of childhood, when, at the evening fireside, a group of neighbors called back the times and friends they had left behind in old Londonderry.

I will name another service in which the clergy took the lead in inculcating resistance to the encroachments of royal power; of this I will give but one instance of many at hand. The Rev. Mr. Wise, minister of Ipswich, Mass., was in the habit of publicly and privately teaching the people that taxation was unjust, if levied by the home government without the consent of provincial assemblies. He was teaching doctrines new to his generation, that become watchwords in the times of the Revolution; was warned of his danger, but, heedless of that danger, pressed on, till in 1688 he was thrown into prison by the tyrant Andros. I respectfully commend that eminent and notorious precedent to those who are hard pressed by a sense of duty to "rebuke the presumption" of the clergy. It was this same spirit that, as an element of their existence, had come down from ages past, and inspired their efforts to produce and sustain the Revolution. In that time the ministers did not petition the Government, but the Government petitioned the clergy. When the people saw themselves in peril, they turned naturally to those who had been their counsellors in civil and religious affairs. Hence it created no surprise, that, nineteen months before the Declaration of Independence, the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts addressed a circular letter to every clergyman in the Colony, "praying his influence against the encroachments of royal power." [See note at the close.] Almost the entire body of the clergy made it the theme of their discourse. It was for that reason the British officers bore such hatred to this class, and delighted to cast indignity on their places of worship, using them as barracks for troops or stables for horses.

I have a list of persons proscribed in 1774, that was thrown into camp, with this direction :

*"To the officers and soldiers of his Majesty's troops in Boston.*

"It being more than probable that the King's standard will soon be erected, from rebellion breaking out in the province, it is proper that you, soldiers, should be acquainted with the authors thereof, and all the misfortunes brought upon the province. The following is a list of them: Samuel Adams, James Bowdoin, Dr. Thos. Young, Dr. Benj. Church, Capt. John Bradford, Josiah Quincy, Major Nathaniel Barber, William Mollineaux, John Hancock, William Cooper, *Dr. Chaney, Dr. Cooper*, Thomas Cushing, Joseph Greenleaf, and William Denning. The friends of your King, and country, and America, expect of you, soldiers, the instant rebellion happens, *you will put the above persons immediately to the sword*, destroy their houses, and plunder their effects."

Of those fifteen leaders of rebellion, for whom there was no quarter



and no mercy, two were eminent ministers of the Gospel—Drs. Chaney and Cooper. It is known that John Adams, taking as his companion for life the mother of John Quincy Adams from the family of a clergyman, was constantly associated with that class of men.

It was often the case, that when politicians and statesmen were in doubt as to the course to pursue, that ministers settled that doubt. When the struggle in reference to the stamp act was coming to a crisis, Governor Fitch, of Connecticut, was wavering and halting as to his course. In that hour of suspense, a very young man came forward before a meeting of the Legislature, as the decided and fervent advocate of freedom. He addressed the leading politicians of the Colony; he did it from the pulpit, for he was a minister, Rev. Mr. Dana. His sermon called out the latent sentiment of many timid and wavering men, and fixed as a mordant the political opinions of that Colony. I will not specify further. It is needless to descend to particulars, when all are included. I will give one other instance from another and distant part of the country. It is now claimed that the "Mecklenburg Declaration," made at Charlotte, North Carolina, May 20, 1774, was the first declaration of independence in the Colonies. This being true, then it follows that a minister of the Gospel—Rev. Hezekiah James Balch—was the first man in this land who addressed the first assembly that passed a declaration of independence; for of the three men who addressed the people on that occasion, he took the lead, and was chairman of the committee that drafted the declaration. In the midst of the fearful and doubtful struggle, in 1778, General Lincoln, of Massachusetts, wrote to General Washington for his encouragement, and, among other facts, did not deem it below his notice to speak of the influence of the ministers:

"It is fortunate for us that the clergy are pretty generally with us. They have in this State a very great influence over the people, and they will contribute much to the general peace and happiness."

Though the notices of political meetings and the military movements were given from the pulpit, ministers did not generally bear arms in the war of the Revolution. It was supposed they could be of much more service to the cause by remaining among their people. I will give, however, a very few of many, and purposely select them from extreme parts of the Colonies.

Rev. Mr. Payson, of Chelsea, Massachusetts, was a very learned, mild, and discreet, but firm defender of the mother country; but, when he saw blood shed on the plains of Lexington, called for arms, headed a party in the attack, routed and captured a large company bearing ammunition to the invaders. Many of the troops in the Concord fight were young and raw recruits, and seemed terrified by the rolling drum and moving columns of assailants. In that critical moment, their pastor, Rev. Mr. Emerson, the grandfather of Ralph Waldo Emerson, passed along their ranks with the exhortation, "stand by your country, and God will bless you." He was afterwards chaplain in the army, and, returning from Western service, was taken sick, died, and was buried in my native town, Rutland, Vermont. Rev. Thomas Allen was minister of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. He, like the great body of the clergy, warmly espoused the cause of the oppressed Colonies; used his

utmost exertions to push his townsmen to the scene of anticipated conflict with the forces of Burgoyne. Hearing that they slackened their pace, he joined them to quicken their march, and soon presented them to General Stark. When the forces were drawn up for the battle of Bennington, he, in the spirit of his profession, went alone within speaking distance of the forces of Baum, and besought them to yield without bloodshed. He received in reply a volley of musket balls that shattered the log on which he stood. He then called for his gun, fired the first shot at the enemy, and was foremost through the whole conflict.

After the capture of Savannah, December, 1778, the British used every effort to induce soldiers to turn traitors to their country, and enlist under George III. All this was unavailing, and the men were crowded into prison ships, to perish with the heat of the ensuing summer. Among them was Rev. Moses Allen, who, not content with rousing his people from the pulpit, had taken up arms, and, on the field of battle, showed his valor and devotion the independence of his country.

Bishop Smith, of South Carolina, shouldered his musket and made the most intrepid resistance—stimulating his people by precept and example. His exertions were unabated till taken prisoner at the surrender of Charleston.

Rev. Paul Serquard, of South Carolina, was a member of the first Provincial Congress, and had great influence as a legislator and an orator, animating the people by his fervent addresses from the pulpit.

Rev. Samuel Warren, called to Europe at the beginning of the Revolution, was tempted by the most liberal offers to return and uphold the cause of the King; he dashed aside every temptation, and braved every danger for the liberty of his country. The same honorable mention may be made of Rev. Dr. Percy, Rev. Mr. Lewis, and Rev. Dr. Purcell. All of these were of the established church in South Carolina.

Not less energetic and efficient were the independent ministers of the same State, Rev. Messrs. Furman, Smith, and Lennart. The last of these was a member of the Provincial Congress and House of Assembly; and in every place preached resistance to oppression, and stood forth an unshaken champion of liberty and independence. While passing to another point, I will give an instance of the conduct of a minister in my own State in the last war. The gentleman from New Hampshire [Mr. HIBBARD] has deemed it proper to charge the ministers with preaching treason, and praying for starvation, in the war of 1812. I know of no warrant for such a statement; and the gentleman has not given us his authority. Would it not have been quite as fair to give the facts, as every one knows them, that there was division among all other classes, as well as among the clergy, in regard to that war? The same charge, with others, was long since made by Colonel Hayne, and I adopt Mr. Webster's reply:

"There were presses on both sides, popular meetings on both sides, ay, and pulpits on both sides also; indiscreet sermons, frothy paragraphs, and fuming popular addresses—whatever the pulpit in its moments of alarm, the press in its heats, and parties in their extravagance, have severally thrown off in times of general excitement and violence."

There was dissension among the members of the bar of New Hampshire on that subject. And I put it to the candor of the gentleman

himself, whether it would be just to hiss from the stage a company of New Hampshire lawyers, petitioning against the extension of slavery, on the ground that forty-two years since, men of the same profession thought the war of 1812 unnecessary? And yet that is the sole ground on which he wishes to cashier the clergy of the present time. I will proceed with the statement. When Provost came down upon Plattsburg, with fourteen thousand men, McComb had only fourteen hundred men to defend the place and check the march of the invader. The only resort was to arouse the country around. A courier, hastening through that portion of Vermont bordering on the lake, halted at the door of a little church in a retired village of Franklin county. The pastor and his flock were closing religious services, preparatory to the sacrament of the Sabbath. The startling announcement was made, and the question was raised, who will go to the defence of their country? No long delay before the pastor said, "Brethren, I will go. Who will go with me?" It is needless to say that a company instantly set out for the scene of action, the clergyman was made their captain, and, after fighting bravely in defence of their homes, returned quietly to their peaceful village. Governor Tompkins, of New York, presented the pastor with an elegant edition of the Bible, and on the first fly-leaf was a noble letter, written by his own hand, complimenting the patriotism of the minister. It was my fortune to be in Fairfield, and go to the place of election with "Father Woster," when he cast his last ballot. He was in the decrepitude, but not in the dotage of age. He could never again renew his strength and mount upward as the eagle, but the fire flashed from his eagle eye when he recounted the scenes of his stirring conflict.

Mr. Woster was, like the rest of his profession, averse to war, unless demanded by the stern necessity of self-defence. He believed that the questions in controversy in 1812 might be settled by arbitration or diplomacy, without bloodshed and without dishonor. He thought so, and like an honest man so he spoke. Was there any "sedition" in all that? But when his country was invaded, all other questions were laid aside, and he thought only of repelling the hostile aggression. I believe he was substantially a fair representative, in the above respect, of those ministers of New England who thought the war needless. It was, therefore, with the utmost pain and mortification that I heard a New England man branding the New England clergy as traitors to their country.

I wish to call attention to one other matter in which the ministers exercised influence, viz: in adopting the present Constitution. I know of no other instance in which a free people so suddenly, of their own will, changed the great organic law under which they were to live. The English Constitution is the slow and gradual growth of ages. The change from the old Confederation to the new Constitution was made instantly, and is looked upon as one of the most critical and hazardous experiments in our history. While Patrick Henry and other great statesmen used their giant strength to resist the change, the New England clergy, with great unanimity, used, publicly and privately, their personal and official influence to bring the people to adopt the present Constitution. I should be glad to dwell on the position that ministers

have taken when brought into civil affairs, but I will barely name two of them—Witherspoon, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, one of the most clear-minded, firm, and useful men in the American Congress; and Muhlenberg, an able and practiced statesman of Pennsylvania, who was chosen the first Speaker of this House under the Constitution. Witherspoon and Muhlenberg were ministers of the Gospel.

Grave emphasis is laid on the necessity of education for the safe working and permanence of our free institutions. This is the unflinching theme of exhortation, of argument, and declamation, of every class. To whom do we look for directing influence in education? Since the beginning of the Christian era, in the preservation of learning during the dark ages; in the revival of learning, when the cloud was lifted from off the world—in all that time, and in every place, the clergy have exercised a strong influence; but nowhere else have they had such an influence as in the United States. They began their efforts in the very earliest stage of our colonial existence. They and their flocks began a system of common schools, that all children might be able to read the word of God. It was by their counsels that the foundations of Cambridge and Yale were reared, and nine of every ten colleges in the land owe their origin to the same source. Through all our early history, the young men had their preparation for college with the ministers. The first charter of an academy was in 1780, and the system did not become general till near the close of the century. The old system of education had some decided advantages. It might not give more learning than its substitute, but young men were likely to start on their career in life with better habits and principles, and higher aims, and stronger resolutions for effort. It was under that system of education that the great minds of our nation entered on their course. In a very recent conversation with a keen observer of society, [Senator PHELPS,] he mentioned this as one of the causes of the difference between the past and present race of public men. The clergy are taking the lead in education now. They have kept pace with the population, as it has moved westward to western New York, Ohio, and all the States and Territories in the Mississippi valley. They may be found from the extreme limits of Texas on the south, to the Canadian frontier on the north. They have crossed the Isthmus, and doubled the Cape, following the daring adventurer to the placer on the Pacific, and everywhere establishing schools and rearing churches. They are especially intent on the education of the people. Contributions from the North and East for these purposes may be counted by millions. Men from the West seem to take pleasure in tossing their taunts at the clergy of the North and East, and yet many of the colleges in their own districts could not live a single year without the efforts of those reviled ministers. A generation since, a young minister left his Atlantic home for a residence in the West. Tracing his way on the marked path of the pioneer, he reached a small settlement of log huts on the banks of the lake. He cast his lot with the adventurers, shared in their perils, rejoiced in their joy, and grew with the growth of his adopted home. That little cluster of huts has become a city—that young minister is an aged man. He and his Christian allies of other creeds have planted

churches and schools, academies and colleges. There is now a healthful, intellectual, moral, and religious influence felt in all that community. As that aged minister moves along the beach and the wharf to the place where freemen enjoy their franchise, his careworn countenance and his gray locks waving in the wind would mark him as a man worthy of peculiar respect. He has hardly entered the place for the gathering freemen, when he is met by a little whiskered scavenger of the custom-house, a Government official, who flouts that aged man; tells him that it is no place for him; that ministers have no right to meddle with politics.

The works of those men are not confined to our own country; almost every denomination is sending its messengers to foreign heathen lands. Those men go with very humble means, and labor for life in translating and teaching the Scriptures. You send to the same places all the various grades of ministers of the Government. They go with ample means, clad in the robes of office, and bearing the badge of power; and yet these ministers of the Gospel are doing more to make a favorable impression on foreign nations than your ministers of State; and any intelligent man, who wanted accurate knowledge of foreign languages, or religion or, geography, or geology, or manners and customs, or any art or science, or even of government, would sooner consult the "heralds" of missionary societies, than the archives in the Department of State. I wish now to present the opinion of Mr. Webster concerning this class of men, as expressed in his argument on the Girard Will, in the Supreme Court, 1844 :

"Sir, I take it upon myself to say, that in no country in the world, upon either continent, can there be found a body of ministers of the Gospel who perform so much service to man, in such a full spirit of self-denial, under so little encouragement from Government of any kind, and under circumstances always much straitened and often distressed, as the ministers of the Gospel in the United States, of all denominations.

"They form no part of an established order of religion; they constitute no hierarchy; they enjoy no peculiar privileges—in some States they are even shut out from all participation in the political rights and privileges enjoyed by their fellow-citizens: they enjoy no tithes—no public provision of any kind. And except here and there, in large cities, where a wealthy individual occasionally makes a donation for the support of public worship, what have they to depend upon? They have to depend entirely upon the voluntary contributions of those who hear them.

"And this body of clergymen has shown, to the honor of their own country, and to the astonishment of the hierarchies of the old world, that it is practicable in free Governments to raise and sustain a body of clergymen—which for devotedness to their sacred calling, for purity of life and character, for learning, intelligence, piety, and that wisdom which cometh from above, is inferior to none, and superior to most others—by voluntary contributions alone.

"I hope that our learned men have done something for the honor of our literature abroad. I hope that the courts of justice and members of the bar of this country have done something to elevate the character of the profession of the law. I hope that the discussions above (in Congress) have done something to meliorate the condition of the human race, to secure and extend the great charter of human rights, and to strengthen and advance the great principles of human liberty. But I contend that no literary efforts, no adjudications, no constitutional discussions, nothing that has been done or said in favor of the great interests of universal man, has done this country more credit, at home and abroad, than the establishment of our body of clergymen, their support by voluntary contributions, and the general excellence of their character, their piety, and learning."

Shall such men be scouted, and stigmatized, and disfranchised, because they have remonstrated against what they believe to be an unjust

law? They do not view the Nebraska bill merely as a political question, but a moral question. They have never been inclined to meddle in politics. For forty years you have been discussing the tariff, and bank, and land, and internal improvement questions; their silence on all these, though affecting their personal interests, is proof of their non-intervention in politics. There is no other body of men in the land so universally and intensely hostile to a union of church and State. Such a charge is a sheer, bald fabrication. They *are* inclined to exercise their privilege when Congress legislates on *moral* questions. They did so very generally in regard to Sabbath mails, and they have done so now in reference to the extension of slavery, both of which they had an unquestionable right to do. You need not attempt to drag your victim behind a political parapet, and shut out the clergy, or seal, or silence, or muzzle their mouth, by a Congressional ban, while the cries of that victim are sounding over the whole heavens. Do we really enjoy equal rights? Go into the city of New York, and see with what partiality the most ignorant and unnaturalized alien is treated. You take to your alliance the very sweepings and gleanings of a foreign pauper-house. European prisons disgorge their contents, and vomit them upon our shores; you go down upon the beach, rake over the slime, and bring every living, moving thing, unwashed, to the ballot box; but if a minister of the Gospel, who has spent his life in promoting education and sound morals, comes to enjoy his franchise, you bid your bullies to hustle him from the crowd; all the while the gentleman from New York, [Mr. TWEED,] and his brethren in the city government, clothed in white robes, the emblem of purity, stand by to see that republican justice is administered.

I have no doubt that it will surprise most of you to hear the avowal of my sincere belief, that no other equal number of men in that land understand the history of legislation on the subject of slavery so well as the clergy. The cause is apparent; no other class have had such a stimulus to study it. For twenty years it has been discussed in their clerical meetings, in their mixed meetings. The discussion has not been on one side; three of the great leading religious denominations have discussed it from the extreme North to the extreme South. This has been done in State and National conventions, and conferences and assemblies. The great Methodist organization has been rent asunder by it. The discussion has been carried on in almost all other sects; ministers have been compelled to study it by necessity, if not of choice. The charge of ignorance on *that subject* is very unfortunate, for it is entirely unfounded. The gentlemen from New Hampshire and New York, and myself, may go into our districts, and wake up the pastors at midnight, and they will tell us more than either of us, or all of us, know of the history. What is the difficulty in understanding it? Take the Nebraska bill, put the debatable matter in a single sentence. "In 1820, Congress admitted Missouri into the Union as a slave State, on condition that slavery should be forever prohibited in the Louisiana Territory north of 36° 30'; that was the compromise; in 1854 it is proposed to retain Missouri as a slave State, and *permit* slavery in all the rest of the Louisiana Territory." That is the main question in issue. What is there so mysterious about it? Cannot it be understood

by a minister who is able to explain the Epistle to the Romans and the Apocalypse? Cannot its elements be known unless smelted by authority in some little puddling political furnace?

It is often declared that ministers are behind others in those improvements tending to advance our race. In reply, I have only to ask you to look at the list of inventions and discoveries in mechanics, in the arts and sciences, and you will find they have done more than their full share. Take one case in point. Cotton Mather was probably the most learned man of his century; his knowledge was not confined to his own professional pursuits. Dr. Franklin said that his essay "On Doing Good" had influenced him all his life. The community in which that minister lived was afflicted by the prevalence of the small-pox, and no preventive was known to forestall the scourge. In that hour of calamity, Mather proposed inoculation. Tradition asserts that inoculation for small-pox had been practiced in the mountains of Wales and among wild tribes of Africa. Lady Mary Wortley Montague, returning from Turkey, had her child inoculated in London the same month in which Mather, ignorant of that fact, proposed it in Massachusetts. He assembled a council of physicians; all of them, except Dr. Boylston, scouted it as a heresy, and resorted to theology to put it down. Mather and the ministers resorted to medical science to sustain it, and thus the doctors and preachers changed weapons in the scientific war. The town meetings voted it down unanimously. Politicians took the side of the doctors; the General Court passed a bill making it penal to inoculate; but Mather and the ministers were inflexible; the Atlantic ocean beat Mrs. Partington; inoculation was introduced, and thousands of lives were saved.

I do not doubt that you may find in the ministry, as in other classes, ignorant, weak, and wicked men; but I believe the great mass, of all sects, are discreet, intelligent, pious, and patriotic. If there were no interests linked to an existence beyond the present, we should still need their influence in promoting education and pure morals, if such a thing be possible without religion. Standing aloof, as they generally do, from political strife, having no personal ambition or personal interest, they tend to check the impulsive and headlong movements of transient excitement, and lead to act uniformly and steadily under the guidance of settled and permanent principle. They thus act as a great conservative body of wise and good men; and hence, as a mere matter of policy, I look on the present effort to crush them as one of the grossest blunders. Go over the world, in the past or present time, and you will find this one law written in all its history: *Wherever you find a free, independent, intelligent ministry of the Gospel, there you will find a free people, and you can find them nowhere else.* Go to Spain, where a debased clergy are the crawling sycophants of arbitrary power; to Russia, where thirty-five millions of serfs uphold its splendid despotism; to the arid plains of the East, where the aged parent is cast out to die, and the carrion bird screams and flaps her wings over him ere life is extinct; or to the oriental city, where the night winds are loaded with the wailings of children left by their mothers to perish: there you will find no Congress vexed by the memorial of independent, fearless Christian ministers. That class can only be found in the home of freedom.

In closing, I must say a word of compliment to the bill before us. If it must pass, as I trust it will not, I hope it may be done on the 26th of this month, the day of the great eclipse. When that act of perfidy is done, the sun should be darkened in heaven, and the moon withdraw her light, and the stars in the twilight thereof be darkened. As a political era, it will be a day of darkness and thick clouds, and on it will rest the blackness of darkness forever.

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NOTE.

The Provincial Congress assembled in November, 1774, [in Cambridge, Massachusetts,] resolved to get in readiness twelve thousand men, to act on any emergency; and that a fourth part of the militia should be enlisted as minute men, and receive pay; appointed two additional officers, and sent persons to New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, to inform those Colonies of its measures, and request their co-operation in making up an army of twenty thousand men.

A circular letter was addressed to the several ministers in the Province, requesting their assistance in averting the threatened slavery. The form of the letter was as follows :

"REV. SIR: We cannot but acknowledge the goodness of Heaven in constantly supplying us with preachers of the Gospel whose concern has been the temporal and spiritual happiness of this people. In a day like this, when all the friends of civil and religious liberty are exerting themselves to deliver this country from its present calamities, we cannot but place great hope in an order of men who have ever distinguished themselves in their country's cause, and do therefore recommend to the ministers of the Gospel, in the several towns and other places in this Colony, that they assist us in averting that dreadful slavery with which we are now threatened."—*Holmes's American Annals*, vol. ii., pp. 315, 316, as quoted in Allen's "*Inquiry into the Views, &c., of the Leading Men in the Origination of our Union*," vol. i., p. 54.